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PRESS RELEASE

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Maryland Woman Pleads Guilty to Wrongfully Obtaining Over \$350,000 From Non-Profit Organization Through Fraudulent Checks and Debits

WASHINGTON - A 45-year-old Maryland woman, Vonda L. Burns, pled guilty on Wednesday, May 26, 2010, to wrongfully obtaining approximately \$356,607.10 over a 3 ½ year period through fraudulent checks and debit transactions drawn against her employer, the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium ("NAEPDC"), a non-profit organization, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Jeffrey W. Irvine, Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office, U.S. Secret Service, and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief, Metropolitan Police Department ("MPD"), announced today.

Burns, of Laurel, Maryland, entered her guilty plea to mail fraud before the Honorable Alan Kay, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. When sentenced in August by the Honorable Ellen S. Huvelle, Burns faces up to 20 years of imprisonment, but is likely to receive 21 to 27 months of incarceration under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, and be required to make restitution.

According to the government's evidence, NAEPDC was a non-profit service and advocacy organization headquartered in the District of Columbia which sought to advance state adult education programs. NAEPDC had a Non-Profit checking account with Wachovia Bank, N.A. The signature card for that account authorized the NAEPDC Treasurer and Executive Director to sign on behalf of NAEPDC for transactions to and from that account.

From February 1, 2006, until December 15, 2009, Burns was an Executive Assistant at NAEPDC. In her position at NAEPDC, Burns was not authorized to sign checks on behalf of NAEPDC. Burns lived in Laurel, Maryland, and had a bank account with PNC Bank.

In mid-December of 2009, the Executive Director for NAEPDC, for whom Burns worked, told Burns he wanted to balance the NAEPDC books. Burns did not show up at the time scheduled by the Executive Director for that task and the Executive Director began the task without her. During the initial review of NAEPDC's books by the Executive Director, he found that there was approximately a \$70,000 deficit in checks written against the organization. On December 15, 2009, the Executive Director reported

this discrepancy to the MPD Check and Fraud Unit.

At the direction of the MPD Detective, the Executive Director gathered all the relevant documents written regarding checks issued by NAEPDC. Those records showed that Burns, on a very regular and repeated basis between January 7, 2008, and December 13, 2009, had forged the Executive Director's signature on numerous NAEPDC checks that fraudulently were written to Burns or to organizations to which Burns owed money for personal expenses. The records also showed that Burns, on a very regular and repeated basis between May 12, 2006, and November 30, 2009, fraudulently caused numerous Automated Clearing House ("ACH") debits to the checking account of NAEPDC to provide money to Burns or to organizations to which Burns owed money for personal expenses. These checks and debits were not authorized by NAEPDC.

Burns cashed some of the fraudulent checks she received from NAEPDC at various Wachovia Banks in the Washington, D.C., area and deposited other checks into her PNC account. Burns used funds from the monies she fraudulently obtained from NAEPDC for personal expenses, including money she spent on gambling in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and at Dover Downs in Delaware.

With regard to the debits caused by Burns, these ACH transactions were processed through computers or over the telephone, some from Burns's office in Washington, D.C., and some from her home in Maryland, and were for amounts made payable to various merchants around the United States. These ACH transactions primarily consisted of prearranged payments for Burns's bills and prearranged deposits to Burns' various accounts. Other ACH transactions were web-initiated entries for Burns's various web purchases through websites like Amazon.com, PayPal.com and iTunes.

As a result of Burns's fraudulent actions, NAEPDC suffered losses of approximately \$356,607.10.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, U.S. Secret Service Special Agent in Charge Irvine, and MPD Chief Lanier praised the hard work of the investigators involved in this matter, especially U.S. Service Special Agent Kevin Rydalch and MPD Detective Richard Espinosa. They also acknowledged the efforts of Paralegal Specialist Mary Treanor, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Butler, who is handling this prosecution.